

Message Text

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ACTION AF-04

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOGADISCIO 1178

LIMDIS

NAIROBI PLS PASS AMBASSADOR LOUGHRAN

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: MILY, SO, ET
SUBJECT: SOMALI RESTRAINT IN SUPPORTING LIBERATION FRONTS

1. IN A DISCUSSION OF SOMALIA'S MILITARY POLICIES ON MAY 24, COL AHMED MOHMOUD ADBEL-HALIM, THE EGYPTIAN MILITARY ATTACHE, TOLD THE CHARGE THAT THE CLAIMS OF THE WESTERN SOMALI AND SOMALI ABO LIBERATION FRONTS (WSLF AND SALF) WERE HIGHLY EXAGGERATED. HALIM SAID THE ALMOST DAILY REPORTS APPEARING IN THE FRONTS' NEWS RELEASES, "DANAB", MAY HAVE SOME BASIS IN FACT, BUT HE THOUGHT THEY COULD NOT BE ACCEPTED AS ACCURATE REPORTS. HALIM ADDED THAT HIS SOURCES IN THE WSLF CONTENDED THE FRONTS DO PLAN A MAJOR UNDERTAKING TO CONCIDE WITH THE END OF MAY. HALIM EXPLAINED THAT THE FRONTS WANT TO DO SOMETHING DRAMATIC TO CALL ATTENTION TO THEIR CONTINUED EXISTENCE AND SUCCESSES IN THE OGADEN. HE DID NOT, HOWEVER, BELIEVE
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THEY WOULD BE SUCCESSFUL IN ACCOMPLISHING ANYTHING AS SIGNIFICANT AS TAKING AND HOLDING A MAJOR TOWN, EVEN FOR A SHORT PERIOD.

2. THE EGYPTIAN SAID THE GSDR IS PROVIDING THE FRONTS WITH A LIMITED NUMBER OF RIFLES AND SMALL ARMS, PISTOLS AND HAND GUNS. THE FRONTS, HE SAID, ARE NOT AT ALL HAPPY WITH THE GSDR BECAUSE

THE SOMALI NATIONAL ARMY REFUSES TO PROVIDE THE FRONTS WITH THE WEAPONS THEY REALLY WANT, ANTI-TANK MISSILES, MINES AND EXPLOSIVES. HALIM SAID THE FRONTS CAN AND DO CAPTURE A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF EQUIPMENT FROM THE ETHIOPIANS, AND CERTAINLY OBTAIN FOOD SUPPLIES FROM THE GSDR, BUT IN HIS JUDGEMENT THE SDR IS FOLLOWING A POLICY OF RESTRAINT IN DENYING THE FRONTS WHAT THEY WANT MOST. HE DID NOT HAVE ANY PRECISE INFORMATION ON MANPOWER. HOW DO YOU TELL A YOUNG REFUGEE FROM A GUERRILLA FIGHTER, HE ASKED? IF FRONT MEMBERS COME TO SOMALIA THEY RECEIVE FOOD AND MEDICAL CARE JUST AS ANY OTHER SOMALI FROM THE OGADEN WOULD, HE CONTINUED. HE DID NOT THINK THE FRONTS HAD A MANPOWER PROBLEM. HE DID SAY HE THOUGHT THE GSDR DID NOT WANT ANY MAJOR ESCALATION OF UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE IN THE DISPUTED AREAS, THE OGADEN, AND THEREFORE WERE DETERMINED THE FRONTS SHOULD NOT MAKE A BIG SPLASH AT THE END OF MAY.

3. TURNING TO THE SOMALI NATIONAL ARMY (SNA) ITSELF, HALIM SAID HE THOUGHT THE FORCE WAS IN FAIR CONDITION, BUT STILL DEEPLY TROUBLED AT THE LEADERSHIP LEVEL BY THE FAILURE OF PRESIDENT SIAD TO DEVELOP A DEPENDABLE SOURCE OF HEAVEY EQUIPMENT. HALIM DID NOT RULE OUT THE POSSIBILITY OF ANOTHER ATTEMPTED COUP. HE SAID THE SNA HAVE TAKEN UP DEFENSIVE DISPOSITIONS ALONG THE COUNTRY'S WESTERN BORDERS, BUT LACKS ADEQUATE EQUIPMENT TO BE MORE THAN A MARGINAL DETERENT. HE ESTIMATED SHORTAGES OF THIRTY TO SIXTY PERCENT IN HEAVEY EQUIPMENT, ADDING THAT TANKS WERE PARTICULARLY

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SHORT, BUT THAT THE GRAVEST DEFECT OF ALL WAS THE SNA'S LACK OF AN ANTI-AIRCRAFT CAPABILITY.

4. COMMENT: HALIM HAS LONG BEEN REGARDED AS THE BEST THIRD-COUNTRY MILITARY OBSERVER IN MOGADISCIO. WHAT HE TELLS US IS CLEARLY DESIGNED TO SUPPORT EGYPTIAN POLICY, BUT WE HAVE FOUND HIM REASONABLY ACCURATE. WE BELIEVE HE HAS PUT HIS FINGER ON THE ESSENCE OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE GSDR AND THE FRONTS. THE WSLF AND THE SALF OBVIOUSLY WANT MORE SUPPORT THAN THEY ARE GETTING. THE GSDR IN TURN IS NO DOUBT PROVIDING WHAT IT BELIEVES IS THE MINIMUM IT MUST PROVIDE ITS "BROTHERS" IN THE CONTINUING STRUGGLE FOR SELF-DETERMINATION. WE THINK HALIM'S ASSERTION THAT THE GSDR DOES NOT WANT A MAJOR ESCALATION IN THE OGADEN IS CORRECT. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THE GSDR IS CONCERNED ABOUT LOW PROFILE RESISTANCE IN THE AREA.

VOUGHT

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